

County of Santa Clara
Board of Supervisors
Supervisorial District Three
Supervisor Dave Cortese



98193

DATE: August 27, 2019
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Dave Cortese, Supervisor
SUBJECT: Climate Emergency Restoration Resolution

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Adopt Resolution declaring a climate emergency that demands immediate action to halt, reverse, restore and address the consequences and causes of global warming. (Cortese)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no fiscal implications associated with adopting this resolution.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The County of Santa Clara has a history of proactively addressing significant issues, including reducing its use of fossil fuels and other actions to address climate change.

Human-induced climate change is pushing the planet toward the sixth mass species extinction, which threatens the food security, water supply, and well-being of billions of people, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

My office has worked directly with County Counsel in developing this proposed resolution which states:

1. Global climate change caused by human activities has resulted in a climate emergency that urgently and severely impacts the economic and social well-being, health and safety, and security of the County of Santa Clara, the State of California, and the United States.
2. Global climate change demands immediate mobilization of resources and labor at a massive scale and at every level — local, state, national, international, social, industrial, and economic —to halt, reverse, mitigate, and prepare for the consequences of the climate emergency and to restore the climate for future generations.

BACKGROUND

To this day, 500 cities across the globe have declared Climate Emergencies to spur citywide efforts to end greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and transition to a local economy that is ecologically sustainable. Bay Area cities that have declared Climate Emergencies include San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, Alameda, Hayward, Fairfax, Petaluma, Cupertino, and Santa Cruz. There is ample evidence to support that we are in the midst of a Climate Emergency. An October 2018 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report predicted that the world has only until 2030 to limit devastating global warming. The most disastrous consequence of anthropogenic climate change is the release of massive amounts of methane and carbon dioxide from the Arctic and Tundra regions of our planet, which will incite a global temperature increase of 8 degrees Celsius and trigger an ice-free Arctic Ocean for the first time in over 100,000 years, rendering much of our earth uninhabitable. Sea levels would rise over 200 feet activating the complete flooding and obliteration of the Florida panhandle, the development of a vast inland sea in the San Joaquin Valley, and the obliteration of coastal cities throughout the world. NASA scientists have concluded that the destruction of the Greenland Ice Sheet could trigger sea levels by 23 feet and generate several billion climate refugees, resulting in, what they call a “global-scale catastrophe.”

The Earth used to exist with under 300 parts per million of CO₂ in our atmosphere. Today, our atmosphere holds over 400 parts per million of CO₂. The last time our CO₂ level exceeded 400 ppm was millions of years before human existence. Climate Restoration is a movement to remove excess CO₂ and restore atmospheric concentration to healthy pre-industrial revolution levels by 2050 such that our Earth can sustain ecosystems and human life.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency (PDF)